

News story: Thousands of schools to pilot new reception class check-up

Over 9,600 primary schools have registered to take part in the pilot of the Reception Baseline Assessment (RBA), the new 20-minute check that will provide a snapshot of pupils' development when they start school.

The assessment will enable the removal of Key Stage 1 tests that currently take place at the end of year 2, reducing overall workload for schools. The change will also mean schools are recognised for the work they do throughout the whole of primary school rather just between years 2 and 6, as is currently the case.

Over half of eligible primaries will take part in the pilot, which will run this September and enable schools to familiarise themselves with the assessment before providing feedback to the Department for Education, ahead of the national roll out in 2020.

The assessment has been designed to reflect those that most schools already carry out in reception. It will take roughly 20 minutes, be carried out during one-to-one time with pupils, and does not have a pass mark.

School Standards Minister Nick Gibb said:

Just like checking a child's teeth or their eyesight, the reception baseline assessment is a quick check of a child's early language and ability to count when they start school. It will provide the baseline of primary school progress which is an important check of our school system, providing important information on schools' performance to make sure all children reach their potential.

The pilot is an opportunity for schools to familiarise themselves with the format and help us make sure it works for both children and teachers – that's why it's so significant that almost 10,000 schools have registered to take part.

The assessment will lighten the load for schools, which will no longer have to carry out whole-class assessments at the end of year 2 or deal with the test papers and administration that comes with that, while also being stress-free for children.

Schools will not receive individual scores for the assessment, instead getting a series of short, narrative statements that will say how each child performed, which they can use for informing teaching in the first term.

There is no reason for parents or teachers to prepare children ahead of the assessment. As such, carried out in the right way, children should not be aware an assessment is taking place. Progress data will be shared with

schools following children's completion of Key Stage 2 tests at the end of primary school, preventing labelling or grouping of pupils.

Nick Brook, deputy general secretary of school leaders' union NAHT, said:

If a baseline assessment is to be a success, it is absolutely critical that it is done right, which is why it's encouraging that so many schools have signed up for the pilot. This will mean that the assessments can be trialled across the full range of provision. This is important because it will tell us whether the assessment which has been developed works for teachers and children, and what the next steps should be.

Children will be assessed orally through simple, practical tasks which could include counting or describing pictures, activities that are broadly consistent with the types of things that take place in reception classrooms already, and some of which parents already teach their children at home.

Pilots will take place from September, in the first half term of the new academic year. Following feedback from schools, the RBA is scheduled to be rolled out across England from September 2020.